

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COUNTY OF SUTTER

1160 CIVIC CENTER BLVD.
YUBA CITY, CALIFORNIA 95993

(530) 822-7106
FAX: (530) 822-7103



April 22, 2003

Ms. Kim Cotto
Department of Water Resources
1416 Ninth Street, Room 1115-16
P.O. Box 942836
Sacramento, California 94236-0001

Dear Ms. Cotto:

In November 2000, Sutter County sent a letter of interest to the Department of Water Resources stating our commitment to participating in the FERC re-licensing process for Oroville Dam and Reservoir, particularly the flood control features. The County has been an active participant in the engineering and operations work group. The Alternate Licensing Process Document specifically states that flood control will be given equal consideration with five other factors (i.e. environment, recreation, etc). In all the meetings to date, there has been virtually no discussion regarding flood control. At the November meeting, the engineering and operations work group stated that they would write a letter to the Corps to expedite a revision of the Oroville Operations Manual. To date, this revision has not been completed. If flood control is not addressed soon then it will not be adequately addressed in the re-licensing application. Attached is a letter of similar concern from the Yuba-Feather Work Group.

In your NEPA Scoping Document 2, Section 3.2.2, the issue of flood control is just briefly addressed. In Section 4.3 the document states that flood management is a "major objective" and "Flood management remains a key purpose of the Oroville Facilities." Why then is it being ignored within the re-licensing process? As the County has noted in previous correspondence, the 1970 Oroville Operations Manual needs to be updated to reflect current hydrological data. The NEPA Scoping Document 2, Section 3.2.2 states that, "The Oroville Facilities are an integral component of the flood management system and accumulated basin precipitation is used to compute adequate flood protection." If current basin data is not reflected in a current operations manual, then how can the facility ensure "adequate flood protection"?

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Below is a recap of the concerns that need to be addressed in the re-licensing process and in your scoping document. Surcharge operations should also be reviewed within your scoping document, as use of the emergency spillway as stated within the current operations manual could have significant environmental impacts (i.e. not using surcharge operation could cause additional downstream flooding).

1. Review and update the Oroville Operations Manual to reflect current flood operations on the Feather and Yuba Rivers. The operation manual for Oroville gives specific direction on facility operation in coordination with New Bullards Bar during high flows on both the Feather and Yuba Rivers. These directions are different depending on the construction and flood operation of the proposed Lake Marysville on the Yuba River. Since this facility has not been built and is unlikely to be built, the operations manual should be revised to only include the current condition of coordinated operations between New Bullards Bar and Oroville Reservoirs. The existing manual states that flow from Oroville is not to exceed 150,000 cfs when there are uncontrolled flows in excess of 120,000 cfs on the Yuba River until a surcharge of 910.7 feet is reached. Page 25 of the manual states, "During the interim period, until storage is provided on the Yuba River, control is achieved by use of maximum surcharge at Oroville Dam."
2. Update the Operations Manual to include the current flood frequency hydrology for the Feather and Yuba Rivers and flood operation practices. Since the 1997 flood event, the Army Corps of Engineers has modified its flood frequency curves to reflect current flood history. The operation of Oroville Dam should be reviewed and modified based on current Corps data. During this review, we suggest that directions be added to provide pre-release of flood water based upon precipitation forecasts and to ensure that the existing directions meet current day standards for flood operations.
3. Support the Yuba County Water Agency's Proposition 13 effort to improve flood control operations via re-operation of Thermalito Afterbay and increased flood storage at Oroville through an inflatable dam on the emergency spillway. These projects, if built, could substantially increase flood protection for Sutter County.

Public safety is our number one concern and a major flood in urbanized Yuba City could affect up to 55,000 people and cause damages in excess of \$1 billion. Our interest is to improve the public benefit from the Oroville and DWR facilities. We appreciate the opportunity to re-address our concerns and hope that flood control can actually be equally reviewed with the other Oroville features.

Ms. Kim Cotto
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If you have any questions in regards to our issues, please contact Mary Keller at 530-822-7450, ext 316.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. C. Nelson", written over a horizontal line.

DENNIS C. NELSON, CHAIRMAN
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DCN:MK:jah
395:FERCLICENSE
cc: Congressman Wally Herger
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